

VINCENT N. SCHEIDT

Biological Consultant

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Mr. Craig R. Lorenz
Craig R. Lorenz and Associates
7565 Acama Street
San Diego, CA 92126

**Subject: Results of a Biology Study of the Theaker Residential Subdivision Project,
TM 5257RPL¹, CP 10846, Ramona**

Dear Craig:

This brief letter presents the findings of a biology study of the 9.3-acre Theaker Residential Subdivision project, TM 5257RPL¹, located at the intersection of Hanson Lane and Ashley Road in the Ramona area of unincorporated San Diego County. This study is based on field surveys of the property I conducted on 25 January and 31 July 2001. These field surveys were conducted between the hours of approximately 12:45 and 14:00, and 10:00 and 11:30 (respectively) during periods of suitable weather (mild temps, clear to hazy skies, no wind). Additional surveys were completed on 6, 17, and 31 March and 30 April 2003 between the hours of 11:30 and 4:00. Shannon M. Allen, Biological Consultant, assisted with the July fieldwork. Based on the results of these surveys, we have identified the following biological resources in association with this property:

VEGETATION

Non-native Grassland (Holland code 42200)

Non-native Grassland vegetation covers the majority of the TM 5257RPL¹ property. Indicators include Wild Oat (*Avena fatua*), Ripgut Brome (*Bromus diandrus*), Field Mustard (*Brassica rapa*), and many others. A scattering of agricultural debris is present in a few locations. A portion of this habitat was disced a few days prior to the initial site survey, making field inventorying and habitat delineating difficult. The applicant has provided a written explanation of the reasons for this tillage (Attachment B). The TM 5257RPL¹ property supports approximately 7.9 acres of Non-native Grassland vegetation. This habitat is generally contiguous on adjoining properties in the vicinity, although it is usually associated with rural backyards and similar situations.

Urban/Developed (Holland code 12000)

Developed areas include paved roads, which form the southern and western edges of the property, an existing home with older ornamental plantings near the site's western edge, and surrounding developed homesites. Indicators in these areas include a number of small to large non-native trees and landscape plantings, including Peruvian Peppertree (*Schinus molle*), European Olive (*Olea europa*), Eucalyptus

(*Eucalyptus* spp.), and others. Approximately 1.4 acres of the TM 5257RPL¹ property qualify as Urban/Developed. Similar development is present more-or-less surrounding the subject property.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Most of the plants and animals detected on the TM 5257RPL¹ property are locally common species. Only a few species of animals were detected - this is mostly due to the general openness of the site. A list of the flora and fauna associated with this property is presented in Tables 1 and 2. Two of the birds detected are considered "sensitive" in San Diego County. These are discussed below.

SENSITIVE SPECIES

Two relatively "low priority" sensitive animal species were detected onsite during the field surveys: Red-shouldered Hawk and Turkey Vulture.

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

Status: California "Fully Protected Raptor" (CDFG, 1998); "Sensitive Bird" County of San Diego, 1995).

Distribution: Central and southern California west of the Sierras. Also Mexico, southeastern Canada, and the eastern United States.

Habitat(s): Mainly inhabits a variety of woodland habitats, including oak woodlands and larger eucalyptus stands.

Status onsite: One individual was seen soaring high overhead at the edge of the property. May nest in the vicinity, but not onsite.

Comments: Believed to be on the decline throughout its current distribution, but population apparently stable in San Diego County.

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

Status: "Declining" (Unitt, 1984), California "Fully Protected Raptor" (CDFG, 1998). "Sensitive Bird" County of San Diego, 1995).

Distribution: Throughout the Western Hemisphere from Southern Canada to the Straits of Magellan in undeveloped areas.

Habitat(s): Open areas where it soars in search of carrion. Often seen roosting on dead trees, etc.

Status onsite: Single specimen was observed flying across the property. Nesting habitat is not present on this site. Remains a relatively common resident species in the County, although becoming scarcer as the area urbanizes.

Comments: Believed to be on the decline throughout its current distribution, but population apparently stable in foothill areas of San Diego County.

No sensitive plants or other sensitive animals were detected. Various other sensitive species could utilize this property, such as Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*), Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) and others. These species are known to

utilize habitat similar to that found onsite. Other sensitive species known from the vicinity of TM 5257RPL¹ are listed in Attachment A.

Two biological resources of concern in the overall Ramona area are: (1) **Vernal Pools** and (2) **Stephen's Kangaroo Rat**. The site was carefully searched for signs of these resources during the field surveys.

Vernal pool habitat is not currently present on this site. This was determined through a detailed examination of all low-lying areas in the field, although the aforementioned tillage of the site limited the initial assessment to a degree. No jurisdictional wetlands or County-defined Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) wetlands appear to be present onsite, although a small depression located near the site's northeast corner (see attached exhibit) supported two potential wetland indicators: Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*) and Common Loosestrife (*Lythrum hyssopifolium*). In order to resolve the issue of vernal pools/wetlands in association with this site, six field reconnaissance surveys of the property were completed by Shannon M. Allen, Biological Consultant and me beginning in late February and continuing at approximately 10-day intervals through the end of April 2003. During each site survey, we carefully examined the potential pool area to search for vernal pool or wetland indicators including hydrology, signs of fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus* and/or *Branchinecta*) and indicator plants, etc.

Throughout the survey period, the potential vernal pool area was dominated by weedy upland annual grasses, including a very dense cover of Ripgut Brome (*Bromus diandrus*), Wild Rye (*Lolium multiflorum*), and Wild Oat (*Avena fatua*). Standing water was only present for a brief 2-3 day period. No invertebrates were observed, and the water was restricted to the deeper furrows that had been created by site discing the prior fall. The water depth was never more than 1.5 inches.

Several relict wetland species were detected, including Woolly Marbles (*Psilocarphus brevissimus*), Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*), and Common Loosestrife (*Lythrum hyssopifolium*). All of these were in very low numbers from 10-20 individuals per species, and no evidence of any sensitive vernal pool species was seen.

Based on all the data collected to date, three facts are apparent:

- The TM 5257RPL¹ site formerly supported bona fide San Diego Mesa Claypan Vernal Pool habitat (Holland Code 44322). Sufficient indicators are present to indicate that this habitat was present in the location previously reported. This was apparently destroyed at some time prior to Mr. Theaker taking ownership of the property from the prior owners, perhaps a decade or more ago.

- The property does not currently support any viable vernal pool habitat. The predominance of the vegetation in the potential vernal pool location is upland, with only residual representation by hydrophytes. Based on existing condition of the feature, it is highly unlikely that claypan vernal pool habitat would become reestablished in this location without significant remedial grading and active habitat restoration.
- The TM 5257RPL¹ site does not currently support wetlands. The minor depression that was searched for vernal pool indicators does not qualify as wetlands under either county, state, or federal definitions, as none of the requisite indicators (predominance of hydrophytes, hydric soils, or wetlands hydrology) are present at this time.

Stephen's Kangaroo Rat (SKR) does not occur on this property. A "Phase I" focused search for signs of occupancy failed to reveal any signs of this species. The "Phase I" SKR study consisted of walking transects across all areas of the property. This was completed as a part of the baseline study of this property during both field surveys. Stephen's Kangaroo Rat requires relatively open areas, and no signs of *Dipodomys* were seen in any of the site's more open areas. The regular tillage of the land and proximity to existing development likely precludes this rare rodent, in any case. Ms. Allen and I repeated the "Phase I" SKR survey on 3 November 2001, pursuant to the current protocol. No signs of SKR were detected during that follow-up survey. The stockpiling of large boulders in corner of the property, and associated soil disturbance in that area resulted in extensive, open, bare patches of soil that were covered with animal tracks, and easy to assess for vertebrate utilization. No SKR tracks, tail draggings, scat, etc. were detected, although tail draggings by at least one species of passerine were detected in one area. SKR is known to occur in the vicinity of the Ramona Airport, approximately 6.9 miles WNW of the site. The airport occurrence is separated from the TM 5257RPL¹ property by dense urban and rural residential development. Access to the property from the airport locality would be extremely difficult. This would certainly preclude recruitment by this highly specialized species. Based on the results of these studies, it appears that the TM 5257RPL¹ site has very low potential for SKR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the project site supports open grassland vegetation, which constitutes foraging habitat for local raptors, including at least two sensitive species, offsite mitigation will be necessary, pursuant to CEQA and the County's RPO. No less than 8.0 acre-credits of Non-native Grassland or higher value habitat (at a 1:1 ratio) shall be secured in a County-approved Mitigation (Conservation) bank prior to recordation of the final map. Implementation of the proposed offsite mitigation credits will reduce all project-related impacts to **Less than Significant**, as defined by CEQA. This also brings the project to compliance with the requirements of the County's RPO.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this biological assessment. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vincent N. Scheidt'.

Vincent N. Scheidt, MA
Certified Biological Consultant

Attachments: Bibliography
Table 1. Floral Checklist – TM 5257RPL¹
Table 2. Fauna Checklist – TM 5257RPL¹
Figure 1. Biological Resources – TM 5257RPL¹
Attachment A. Sensitive Species Known from the Vicinity
Attachment B. Letter from Applicant regarding Clearing of Site

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Table 1. Flora Detected - the Theaker Residential Subdivision Project – TM 5257RPL¹, Ramona.

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Agapathus</i> sp. *	African Lily
<i>Amaranthus albus</i> *	White Tumbleweed
<i>Amaranthus</i> sp.	Tumbleweed
<i>Ambrosia psilostachya</i>	Western Ragweed
<i>Avena fatua</i> *	Wild Oat
<i>Avena</i> sp. *	Wild Oat
<i>Bellis perennis</i> *	English Daisy
<i>Brassica geniculata</i> *	Perennial Mustard
<i>Brassica rapa</i> *	Field Mustard
<i>Bromus diandrus</i> *	Ripgut Brome
<i>Bromus mollis</i> *	Soft Brome
<i>Bromus rubens</i> *	Foxtail Brome
<i>Chenopodium murale</i> *	Goosefoot
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i> *	Field Bindweed
<i>Conyza bonariensis</i> *	Horseweed
<i>Conyza canadensis</i> *	Common Horseweed
<i>Crassula argentea</i> *	Jade Plant
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> *	Bermuda Grass
<i>Distichlis spicata</i>	Desert Salt Grass
<i>Erodium botrys</i> *	Long-beaked Stork's-bill
<i>Erodium moschatum</i> *	White-stem Stork's-bill
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i> *	Murray Red Gum
<i>Eucalyptus</i> sp. *	Eucalyptus
<i>Euphorbia</i> sp. *	Euphorbia
<i>Geranium</i> sp. *	Geranium
<i>Hemizonia fasciculata</i>	Common Tarplant
<i>Hordeum geniculatum</i> *	Wild Barley
<i>Hordeum murinum</i> *	Wild Barley
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. *	Wild Barley
<i>Juncus bufonius</i> var. <i>bufonius</i>	Common Toad Rush
<i>Lactuca serriola</i> *	Wild Lettuce
<i>Lolium temulentum</i> *	Darnel

Table 1. Flora Detected - the Theaker Residential Subdivision Project – TM 5257RPL¹, Ramona (page 2)

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Lythrum hyssopifolium</i>	<i>Loosestrife</i>
<i>Malva parviflora</i> *	Cheeseweed
<i>Nerium oleander</i> *	Oleander
<i>Olea europa</i> *	European Olive
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i> *	Indian Fig
<i>Oryzopsis miliacea</i> *	Indian Rice Grass
<i>Panicum capillare</i>	Western Witch Grass
<i>Parksonia aculeata</i> *	Mexican Palo Verde
<i>Pinus halepensis</i> *	Pine
<i>Polygonum arenastrum</i> *	Yard Knotweed
<i>Polypogon monspeliensis</i> *	Rabbitfoot Grass
<i>Psilocarphus brevissimus</i>	Woolly Marbles
<i>Raphanus sativus</i> *	Wild Radish
<i>Rumex crispus</i> *	Curly Dock
<i>Schinus molle</i> *	Peruvian Peppertree
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> *	Sow Thistle
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i> *	Puncture Vine
<i>Trichostema lanceolatum</i>	Vinegar Weed
<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> *	Chinese Elm
<i>Vicia</i> sp.	Vetch

 * = non-native or non-indigenous taxon.

Table 1. Fauna Detected - the Theaker Residential Subdivision Project – TM 5257RPL¹, Ramona

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<u>Birds</u>	
<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	Red-shouldered Hawk
<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	Housefinch
<i>Cathartes aura</i>	Turkey Vulture
<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	Common Crow
<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	Western Kingbird
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning Dove
<u>Mammals</u>	
<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	
<i>Thomomys bottae</i>	Valley Pocket Gopher
<u>Reptiles</u>	
<i>Pituophis melanoleucus</i>	Common Gopher Snake
<i>Sceloporus occidentalis</i>	Western Fence Lizard

 * = non-native or non-indigenous taxon.

Figure 1. Biological Resources – TM 5257RPL¹

Attachment B
Letter from Applicant Explaining Tillage/Clearing of Site

Figure 1. Biological Resources – TM 5257RPL¹

Grassland Habitats

[illegible]

Attachment B
Letter from Applicant Explaining Tillage/Clearing of Site

Re: [unclear] letter dated October 11, 2001

The property at 1454 Ashley was tilled prior to our purchase of the property for weed control and to clean the trash and appearance, which we purchased on December 27, 2000. On the month of May 2001 we mow the parcel for fire or weed control. At the Southwest corner of the project site there are boulders that are from a highway improvement project they are to be utilized as rip rap for this project in the construction. As for the scraping the area was used as a transfer area. There was some construction materials placed from the highway construction in that area in June 2001 the material was removed in July and Aug. 2001. The scraping was only a result of clean up of the materials.

Tractor

Tom Theaker owner

VINCENT N. SCHEIDT

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Memorandum

To: Mr. Craig Lorenz, Craig R. Lorenz & Associates

From: Vince Scheidt, Consulting Biologist

Date: May 23, 2003

RE: Summary of Spring 2003 Vernal Pool and Fairy Shrimp Evaluation - TM 5257RPL¹

You have asked me to summarize the studies we have completed this winter/spring for the Theaker Residential Subdivision Project, TM 5257RPL¹ in Ramona. As you know, we had identified a potential vernal pool in the northeastern corner of this property in July of 2001. This year, we revisited the pool area during the winter 2002-2003 rainy season in order to complete a directed fairy shrimp survey and to search for other definitive vernal pool indicators.

Six field reconnaissance surveys of the site were completed by Shannon M. Allen, Biological Consultant and me beginning in late February and continuing at approximately 10-day intervals through the end of April. During each site survey, we carefully examined the potential pool area to search for vernal pool indicators including hydrology, signs of fairy shrimp and indicator plants, etc.

Throughout the survey period, the potential vernal pool area was dominated by weedy upland annual grasses, including a very dense cover of Ripgut Brome (*Bromus diandrus*), Wild Rye (*Lolium multiflorum*), and Wild Oat (*Avena fatua*). Standing water was only present for a brief 2-3 day period. No invertebrates were observed, and the water was restricted to the deeper furrows that had been created by site discing the prior fall. The water depth was never more than 1.5 inches.

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- The TM 5257RPL¹ site formerly supported bonafide San Diego Mesa Claypan Vernal Pool habitat (Holland Code 44322). Sufficient indicators are present to indicate that this habitat was present in the location previously reported. This was apparently destroyed at some time prior to Mr. Theaker taking ownership of the property from the prior owners, perhaps a decade or more ago.
- The property does not currently support any viable vernal pool habitat. The predominance of the vegetation in the potential vernal pool location is upland, with only residual representation by hydrophytes. Based on existing condition of the feature, it is highly unlikely that claypan vernal pool habitat would become reestablished in this location without significant remedial grading and active habitat restoration.